

Dear Legislators,

My name is Tony Phillips, LCSW. I am a social worker and ADA Coordinator for a town in Connecticut.

I'd like to start by saying that like many other CT residents, I also enjoy eating outdoors especially during the spring and summer months. I also am in favor of helping small businesses find new ways to attract customers and help the economy.

But during my time as the ADA Coordinator, I have spoken to many people who need accessible parking and accessible pathways in order to enjoy all the wonderful things about our community.

And all too often, during the normal course of things; the built world is just not readily accessible to them.

With the addition of more opportunities for outdoor dining since 2020, it became clear that accessible parking, accessible pathways and thus people with disabilities often became an afterthought.

After the outdoor dining legislation went into effect, I saw many instances of blocked sidewalks, and blocked parking spaces that were now being used to host tables, chairs, tents, planter boxes and more.

All clearly without thought to how someone with a mobility disability would gain access.

I urge you to consider how this legislation impacts people with disabilities across the state because they encourage:

- blocking accessible pathways/sidewalks that were meant to allow all people to safely travel from place to place.
- blocking accessible parking spaces that are necessary for people with disabilities to participate in our community.
- without proper regulation and enforcement, very few of the "streateries" or outdoor dining locations that I have seen actually meet the criteria to be ADA Compatible.

I urge you to consider both the pros and cons of adding additional dining areas on streets, sidewalks and parking lots.

You might consider allowing local police and parking enforcement agents to be able to fine businesses or landlords who block their accessible parking spaces with tables or other materials. Currently this is not allowed.

As I've seen, outdoor dining is often set up to inadvertently create more segregation and hassle for the people who need the pathways and parking the most.

And in many cases, these "streateries" violate the civil rights of so many Connecticut residents; whether its because they block a sidewalk or because there is no seating for someone who uses a wheelchair.

The ADA has been federal law and in effect for over 30 years.

It is time for Connecticut to catch up with the times.

Thank you for your consideration.

Regards,
Tony Phillips, LCSW